1; Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

also have spatial expression. Vaguer local groups, bands, or phratries group together certain clans within one moiety. 614

The tribe is almost a non-existent unit among these people. Its most explicit element is a dialectic unity, but even here the linguistic variation within small local groups is very highly developed. The organized tribe with the use of chiefs does not exist. The tribe is not the war-making group nor does it enforce law. 619 197

It has long been the theory of a great number of anthropological authorities that magic is an individual phenomenon, whereas religion is a social phenomenon. The Durkheim or French school of sociology has been in agreement with this general point of view, although its members differed radically from the American, English, and German schools in their interpretation of religion. Although I am in general agreement with the social interpretation of religion by Durkheim, I cannot follow him or his school in his separation of magic from religion. It is another thesis of this book that magic is also as much a "church" in the Durkheim sense as religion. A test situation is available in this region because, although the peoples of the northern area believe in magic, they have no magicians such as are found in the south. Their substitution of ordinary religious rituals reveals much about the nature of magic. 121

The social mechanisms which are placed in operation within the group by the spread of the knowledge that a black magician has stolen a man's soul, that is, successfully operated on a man, are presented and analyzed in the chapter on magic. When magic is believed to be functioning, all the members of the society act in a manner exactly opposite to the ordinary in their relations with the unfortunate victim. This means that instead of helping to sustain the individual and allowing him to function as a normal person, these protective devices are withdrawn and the attitude is taken that the man is "half dead" and will shortly die. The effect upon the suggestive individual, it is contended in this book, is sufficient to set up certain psycho-physiological reactions which tend to destroy him. When this individual becomes very ill, the movement of social withdrawal from him ceases, and pressure is then applied through mortuary rites which perform the function of attempting to remove him from the society of the living to that of the dead, further destroying his desire to live and frequently bringing about his ultimate death. 761 764

The sacred world of the Murngin is totemically conceived; each individual by virtue of his clan membership possesses and belongs to 771

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

native word for moiety is ba-per-u, meaning the four subsections that belong to each moiety. It probably has reference to bapa (father), although the natives are unconscious of any such association.

The members of each moiety are supposed to speak different languages. The clans around Buckingham Bay, Arnhem Bay, Elcho Island and down the east coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria say they speak the Ko-par-ping-u language if they belong to the Yiritja moiety, and Djam-bar-ping-u if they are Dua. Actually, vocabularies gathered by the author show no difference between the two so-called languages. Language, however, is a native criterion—the final test—used to differentiate local groups. Even each clan is said to have a "language"; and some have a different dialect, but most within a given area speak the same one. The clans claim "languages" of their own by giving themselves linguistic names in addition to group names (see list, pages 39-51).

The people surrounding the Koparpingu and Djambarpingu area say their moieties have linguistic differences that are like Koparpingu and Djambarpingu, but do not consider themselves as being Koparpingu and Djambarpingu. There is considerable regional dialectic variation among the Murngin clans; the division, however, is not on the basis of moiety, but on that of groups of contiguous clan hordes belonging to the same tribe or to different tribes.

Everything in Murngin civilization is divided on this dual basis. There is nothing in the whole universe—plant, animal, mineral, star, man, or culture—that has not a place in one of the two categories. This division is as clear-cut to a Murngin as heaven and hell to a mediaeval theologian, although of course never on the basis of good or bad. The allocation is made by an association that sometimes seems irrational to a European but is perfectly reasonable to the native mind. When one inquires into the underlying concept back of such seeming syncretisms, the reasoning is as justifiable, granted the premise, as for our own classifications.

To illustrate the principle: a red parrot is Dua because of his early association with the Dua creator women; red parrot feathers, one of the chief articles of decoration, are Dua because of this; baskets covered with red parrot feathers are Dua. The spear thrower is Dua, the sting-ray spear belongs to the same moiety, but the wooden spear is Yiritja. The shark belongs to the Dua moiety; the barrimundi is Yiritja, as is black duck.

The above association of objects may seem arbitrary and haphazard

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

Liaalaomir clans, and the Durili and Ding Ding phratries. The last two named are too nebulous in their composition to give their clan membership. Some informants name all the Dua clans as belonging to both, while others place only part of the eastern local units in these groups. 615

The phratry in Murngin society represents a weak attempt within the culture to create new and larger groups than the clan to control the intra-moiety antagonisms. It is an expression of the moiety weakness in controlling the antagonisms of the clans within it. The rivalry for women, as well as the other competitions, excites emotions too strong to be suppressed by phratry solidarity. It is only in the clan that one finds sufficient pressure placed on the antagonisms to prevent open war. 615 587

There is an interesting association between the Warumeri on one side and the Wawilak of the Ritarngo tribe on the other. The two are seventy-five miles apart, a long distance in this culture; yet according to native accounts the black duck totem is supposed to have lived with and performed certain significant acts for each clan in a mythological period, so they are most friendly. Actually, the two do not compete for women, although belonging to the same moiety; but the clans that lie between these two and belong to their moiety do compete, so that the Wawilak and Warumeri have common enemies and like grievances, and possess a convenient myth as a rallying point to express solidarity when associated in warfare against mutual enemies. This association of the two clans, although of considerable importance in their activities, is unnamed and does not class them as a phratry. 614 616 587

The Tribe

The tribes of northeastern Arnhem Land, of which Murngin is one, are very weak social units, and when measured by the ordinary definitions of what constitutes a tribe fail almost completely. The tribe is not the war-making group. On the contrary, it is usually within it that the most intensive feuds are found. Tribal membership of the clans on the borders of two tribes is uncertain and changing, or the people may sometimes insist that they belong to both tribes. Even clans well toward the center of a tribe's territory will, under certain circumstances, range themselves with another group, as will be seen as we examine in the following paragraphs the Murngin tribe. 619

The name Murngin, as stated, is little used, the principle of dual organization being so strong that the moiety names of a particular

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

area are used much more commonly than the tribal to describe a particular people.

Arnhem Land, north of the Roper River and the upper waters of the Katherine River, has four large cultural groups. The differences are mostly in immaterial culture, and although of considerable importance from a local point of view, the cultures are but subtypes of a larger culture. The four divisions, the first the Murngin, are found among the eight tribes that inhabit the country from Cape Wessel in the northeast, the islands and the coast of the eastern side of the Gulf of Carpentaria to Blue Mud Bay, and eastward over to the upper waters of the Goyder and Glyde Rivers. This culture continues westward to Cape Stewart along the coast line of the Arafura Sea. West of them, including the tribe on each side of Caddell and Liverpool Rivers to the seacoast of Van Diemen's Gulf, the Kariera type of social organization is found. South of Blue Mud Bay, along the seacoast, the Mara-Anula form of social organization appears, and the Arunta type is found in the islands of this region.[18]

The Murngin type of culture is possessed by eight tribes: the Murngin, Yaernungo, Burera, Yandjinung, Djinba, Ritarngo, Barlamomo, and Dai. The Yaernungo, Burera, Yandjinung, Djinba and Ritarngo are definitely recognized divisions in the culture, although their exact boundaries are not known, for a border-line clan may be in one group for some purposes and in another for others. The Dai, Barlamomo, and Murngin are not clearly defined in the minds of the natives and the designations are of little consequence in their thinking and seldom used. The Ritarngo and Djinba tribesmen to the south and west call these people to the north of them Murngin, and distinguish them as different from themselves. The Yaernungo, north of the Murngin, do the same, but to a lesser degree. The Yandjinung also call the clans in different areas, including the Karmalanga of Banyan Island and the Wulkara of Howard Island, by the name of Murngin; the Murngin, however, look upon them as members of the Yandjinung tribe. The people of these islands usually consider themselves as belonging to the Yandjinung but occasionally place themselves in the Yaernungo tribe.

The Dai are very frequently classed as Murngin. The dialect of this tribe is that of the clans north of it, which are classed as Murngin.

[18] The names Arunta, Kariera, Mara-Anula, and Murngin are used here not as tribal distinctions, but as types of kinship organizations which form the basic foundation for general variations in the social organization.

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
OI17 Murngin OI17

ritual occasions. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding their binding ritual and economic obligations, the descent group as such is the only unit to which one may turn to obtain aid which will be given more or less automatically.

As Leach has said (1951:53), "the network of kinship relations embraces a great number of local groups [corporate descent groups] and ties them into a kind of loosely knit political system; but throughout the population so linked there is no strong sense of social solidarity and in some cases there are even wide differences of language [as among the linguistic groups] and culture [not in this case, however] between different parts of the one system." That is to say, the usual characteristics of tribal organization are lacking; and it is for that reason that these people of eastern Arnhem Land belong to what I have called the Wulamba bloc, speaking a number of related dialects of one language which in toto are referred to as Miwoidj.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The Wulamba material carries a number of general theoretical implications. These concern primarily, in this context, the corporate or unilineal descent group. The minimal propositions discussed by Leach (1951:52–53) mainly refer to the question of relationship between wife-givers and wife-receivers, and the differentiation of status. These arguments regarding the relevance of status concepts to the analysis of "bride-price" (i.e., bride-wealth) and dowry have not been followed up to any extent here. The status concepts which do exist in Wulamba social life, and are reflected in their kinship system, are those dependent on seniority and reinforced by ritual and sacred ceremony. Other factors linked with status considerations are the prestige attaching to fighting ability, to proficiency in magic, and to parenthood as such. Status derived from these sources need not coincide with ritual and ceremonial status, nor with status associated with seniority in a descent group or a linguistic group. Nevertheless, discussion of all these features would be relevant in any detailed study of kinship and social organization (see Sharp 1934:418–20). But status dependent on being a "wife-receiver" or "wife-giver" is to my mind not relevant. A man's status is not necessarily derived from or enhanced by his being a "wife-giver." It so happens that the "wife-giver" will be socially "superior" (although the term "superior" has connotations which I do not think are applicable here), but he is possessed of this status whether or not he accedes to the expectation that he will give his daughter to his Sr.S. I admit, however, with Leach, that a more detailed analysis is necessary of the economic aspects of the effects of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage. As he states (1951:45), "the reciprocities of kinship obligation are not merely symbols of alliance, they are also economic transactions, political transactions, charters to rights of domicile and land use."[4]

Leach points out that when Kachin-type marriage (and presumably Wulamba marriage) occurs—i.e., matrilateral cross-cousin marriage—it is part of the political structure. Now this may certainly be the case among the Kachin, or among certain African groups, but is it the case among the Wulamba? Our

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
OI17 Murngin OI17

114 acceptance of this aspect will depend on our definition of political structure and its relevance in northeastern Arnhem Land. It is beyond our scope here to discuss this aspect in detail. If, as Radcliffe-Brown has said (1950:xiv), when we are dealing with political systems we are dealing with law on the one hand, and with war on the other, then for the Wulamba we must define what these two concepts mean. Or again, Radcliffe-Brown has shown that in seeking to define the political structure among the Australian Aborigines, we must consider the territorial community which is united by the rule of law. Is this political community among the Wulamba indeterminate? Thus in such a society the political structure concerns the grouping together of individuals within a territorial framework—a separation of group from group within the total system, which may be described in terms of war, feud, and the exercise of recognized authority in settling disputes, and so on. This would of course involve some differentiation of social rôle between persons and between classes of persons. As Radcliffe-Brown has pointed out (1950:xx, xxi), in an area such as the Wulamba, this would involve differentiation on the basis of sex and age and the noninstitutionalized recognition of leadership in ritual, in hunting, in warfare and in craft-specialization, and so on. We may say with Warner (1937) and Leach (1951:53), as I have already mentioned above, that a number of local groups (or corporate or unilineal descent groups) are tied together in a network of kinship, forming a loosely knit political system. For this means in effect that we have the minimal and maximal corporate descent groups, linking in parallel fashion to form a linguistic group, several of the latter forming a clan and all clans being linked in a cultural and social bloc which I have called the Wulamba. Nevertheless, there is no real political solidarity, as we understand it above, among the peoples so linked. There is, however, a loosely conceived political solidarity among those parallel descent groups forming the linguistic group. And that such groups are closely linked in kinship is obvious from what we have said. Many questions could be raised at this juncture concerning concepts of common action in feud and fighting and in the maintenance of law in this context. But again, without considering this in detail, we must say that the linguistic group does not act as one, however closely associated and intimately connected its members may be, scattered among the parallel descent groups, even though they occupy a common, acknowledged, territory and engage together in common ceremonies, belong to the one moiety, speak the one language (or dialect), possess the one sacred emblems and patterns, invocations, and so on. They are the common residential unit; but the political unit, if we may call it that, is the corporate unilineal descent group in its maximal span. A series (two, three, or more) of these political units in parallel fashion form the linguistic group; but political autonomy rests upon each of these units. At this juncture let me discuss briefly the function of such a corporate unilineal descent group. We have already mentioned some of its features, but now we must elaborate its corporate activities in order to justify its being termed a political unit, and to enable us to discuss it in relation to the generalizations indicated by Fortes (1953:24).

619 613 619 [621]

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 Oll7 Murngin Oll7

The yams are engraved in panel *a*, and their foliage indicated by the decorative chevron-like designs at *b* and *c*. The pattern *d* on the upper right, with a meandering line down the centre, is a small fresh-water stream near the totemic place.

The Man, Tualpa, and the Sacred Tree of Blue Mud Bay

This painted pipe represents a sacred tree which once grew on the shores of Blue Mud Bay. One day a man (unnamed), not knowing that the tree was sacred, cut it down to make a special spear, called *bunungana*. *Tualpa*, the owner of the tree, was so angry over the vandalism that he speared the culprit. The dead tree now lies at the mouth of a lagoon emptying into Blue Mud Bay. During the wet season it is submerged by the fresh water flowing from the swamps into the sea. When the swamps are dry, the log is sometimes covered by the high tide.

The transverse bands, *e*, *e*, on Pl. 128B represent the tide marks on the tree; the cross-hatched panel, *a*, the fresh water; and *b*, *c* and *d*, the sea-water, which during the dry season alternately covers and uncovers the tree-trunk.

The Four Jiritja Men of Melville Bay

During *bumun* (creation times) four *jiritja* men,[83] *Djamburi*, *Wanatpi*, *Bandarunga* and *Kainoltja*, created a number of natural features at each of their camps along the shores of Melville Bay.

Plate 128A is the complete design of the painted pipe: *a* is *Djamburi*, *b* is *Wanatpi*,[84] *c* *Bandarunga*, and *e* *Kainoltja*. Each of these men is smoking a pipe. The four squares at *f* are four wells, each man having his own. Their footprints are in panel *e*.

3. BODY PAINTING

In north-eastern Australia the art of body painting is most important, for it is by means of the designs painted on the novices during the various age-grading ceremonies, and on the fully initiated men whilst engaged in their totemic rituals, that the totem, the clan group, *mala*, and the linguistic group, *mata*, of each individual can be recognized. As far as the present evidence goes (the investigation is far from complete) it seems that each *mata*, which may include several *mala*, has its own specific design, which is the personal property of that group and cannot be used by any other.[85] During the circumcision ceremonies[86]

83. It is the mythical men of the *jiritja* moiety only who smoke. It is of interest to notice that the four men depicted on this pipe are not smoking the long Malay pipe, but one which resembles those used by our own party, called by the aborigines *baipai* pipes. Nowadays all aborigines smoke, but a member of one moiety will not use a pipe decorated with the designs of the opposite moiety without the owner's permission. If he did so, the spirit of the pipe would make him ill.

84. See bark painting of *Wanatpi*, Pl. 95B.

85. See myth of the origin of the design of the crabs, *ganjun*, p. 208.

86. In north-eastern Arnhem Land the boys are circumcised when they are from six to eight years of age.

[text continues on p. 402]

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Murngin OII7

302 881 619 *532

I witnessed at Yirrkalla each of the four boys was painted with the *mata* design of the particular language group to which he belonged.* The design would be his throughout life and even at death would be painted on his body. I found out the *mata* of each body painting, its meaning and its associated myth.

The Water-lily, Jouku, and the Wild Bees, Kumon, of Blue Mud Bay

302 *532 *773 616

The myth of an unidentified totemic water-lily, *jouku*, belonging to the *jiritja* moiety of the Matamataui swamps is associated with several other totemic beings, the man *Wanamungarin*,[87] the man *Ngulamung*,[88] the toredo worm, *kaula-waruk*, the queen fish, *tinimba*,[89] the opossum, *marungo*, and the night-bird, *kurnurak*.[90] The wild bees, *kumon*, are also associated with the Matamataui swamps. These totemic bees, when disturbed by a bush-fire, flew to Milingimbi to escape destruction.[91]

Plate 129A illustrates the body painting of a *jiritja* boy of the *mangilili-dalwongu mata*s of the Blue Mud Bay areas, the designs on the torso belonging to the *mangilili mata* (Fig. 64K) and those on the legs to the *dalwongu* (Fig. 64J). The central vertical panel represents a river at the totemic place of the water-lily, *jouku*, the U-shaped figure at the top being a large rock in the bed of that river. On the right-hand side of the abdomen is a fresh-water fish, *bittu*. The remainder of the paintings on the body are symbolical of either the blossoms or the leaves of the water-lily, *jouku*. The diamonds on the upper legs refer to hives of wild bees at the Matamataui swamps.[92]

The Man, Djunkgao, and his Sister, Madalait

The body designs[93] shown on Pl. 129B were painted on a *dua* boy of the *yiredjingu mata* of Port Bradshaw (Fig. 64D). The three horizontal cross-hatched bands under the left armpit symbolize the waves of the sea which attracted *Djunkgao's* attention when he was beaching his canoe at Bilapinja Island.[94] The vertical panels immediately below are coastal sand-hills at Jelangbara, north of Port Bradshaw, and the long vertical panels on the right-hand side of the body are further parallel sand-hills which *Djunkgao* and his sister admired.[95] The horizontal bands across the left hip are the lines of sand which ran down the sides of a drifting sand-hill at Jelangbara, where the lizard, *tjunda*, walked along the crest.[96] The designs on the upper legs also indicate the sand running down the side of the same sand-hill.

Australia: Aboriginal Paintings—Arnhem Land, 1954, p. 13.

87. Engraved pipe, Fig. 63A.
88. Engraved pipe, Fig. 62D.
89. Bark painting, Pl. 106E.
90. Bark-painting, Pl. 115E.
91. Bark painting, Pl. 93B.
92. Bark painting, Pl. 93B.
93. These and similar designs are used extensively in picturing the myth of *Djunkgao* and *Madalait* at Port Bradshaw.
94. Pl. 85E.
95. Pl. 86D.
96. Pl. 86B.

778 The aid of these "Muraian," in which are believed to reside the spirits of their tribal ancestors, may be invoked, and I have heard an old man, addressing a group of initiates, declare that he had lived to an old age because he had been true to his "Muraian," which, he said, had protected him from his enemies and generally cared for him. One man told me that when away out at sea in his canoe, and being suddenly overtaken by a violent storm, he had called upon his "Muraian," and by their aid had been brought safely to land.

614 621 688 796 [778] During the preparations for, or the holding of, these ceremonies[1] it is expected that all matters likely to disturb the peace will be carefully avoided. If someone commits an offence during that period it is regarded as an insult to the particular "Muraian" concerned, and the men of the horde become most violently angry. In such a case the offender must make liberal payments to the chief men of the horde, who, in extreme cases, however, are not satisfied until the offender has been seriously injured, or even killed.

561 778 [587] Though at an early age youths are given some information concerning their own "Muraian," no man undertakes the manufacture of these sacred objects before middle life, and then only under the direction of the old men. From time to time, as opportunity presents itself, a man is shown the "Muraian" of hordes other than his own. Such knowledge is in no way compulsory or essential to his taking his full place in the tribal life, but rather marks an additional stage in his education, and so increases his influence.

614 616 619 778 It is through these "Muraian" that the only cohesion between the various scattered hordes is obtained. Hordes or clans of the same moiety, though as widely separated as Elcho Island and Blue Mud Bay, hold in reverence the same mythological ancestors, possess the same "Muraian," and so regard themselves as the same people.

060 It will be seen, from the above, how wide is the influence of these totemic beliefs, and how important a place they occupy in the life of the people. Further brief reference will be made to them under the heading of Death and Burial Beliefs and Customs.

1 [i.e. "NARA" CEREMONIES — ANALYST]

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
O117 Muragin O117

Warfare and Physique

Warfare

[619] 721 On account of the want of cohesion between the various tribal hordes, each of which maintains to a large extent a separate and independent existence, various causes, such as the competition for women, give rise to much hostility, and warfare is a pronounced feature of the life of this aboriginal community. Though an organised clash of arms is of infrequent occurrence, many are killed under varied circumstances as a result of this tribal hostility. 628 Numerous killings also result from family vendettas, which are carried on through many generations. In the pursuance of these vendettas the usual practice is to take a man by stealth, while he is asleep or when separated from his companions.

A ceremony known as "Makkarata" is a very important and valuable means of healing breaches of the peace. In this ceremony two groups of men, composed of the offending and the offended tribes or divisions respectively, take up their positions some 150 yards apart on a piece of open ground. With each of these groups will be a number of neutral men, who are not concerned in the dispute in question, whose duty it is to see that no unfair advantage is taken by either party.

The chief offender, who is also accompanied by neutrals, then runs backwards and forwards across the centre of the ground, while each man of the offended party throws one or more spears at him. If this man succeeds in avoiding the spears thrown, he then, in a descriptive dance, approaches the offended party, and taking his stand in front of their leader thrusts out his leg, into which a spear is promptly plunged. In this way the offence is wiped out, and peace is restored between these previously hostile parties. I have known feuds of many years' standing to be completely healed by this ceremony.

Physique

142 These coastal tribes of East Arnhem Land are physically of a fine type, virile, pugnacious, and manly. Though generally somewhat slighter in build, the average height of both sexes is approximately the same as that of our own race. Because of their nomadic life, their continual walking, running and dancing, most

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

THE ARNHEM LAND ABORIGINES

Arnhem Land belongs to two main groups, who differ considerably insofar as language and certain aspects of their culture are concerned. Perhaps the best way to present a clear general picture of their culture patterns is to outline and contrast the elements that are outstanding in both. For the sake of brevity we shall not digress to discuss minor local deviations like those of the Groote Eylandt and Rose River areas.

A common cultural bond links most of the Aborigines of western Arnhem Land, taking Oenpelli, the Goulburn Islands, and the Liverpool and King rivers, with its eastern boundary near Cape Stewart; but there are some traditional deviations, as well as some linguistic differences. The Maung of Goulburn Islands seem to have been at one period more or less isolated from contact with the mainlanders, who rarely came over to the islands; but at ceremonial times the Maung would come to Sandy Creek, on the mainland opposite South Goulburn Island, for the big *maraiin* (sacred) rituals.

The people of eastern Arnhem Land, from Cape Stewart to Blue Mud Bay, refer to themselves as the Wulamba group, a number of clans that form a "tribe" with more or less common cultural background. Natives outside this region, for example those at Groote Eylandt, often call them the "Balamumu Confederacy". "Balamumu" may be roughly translated as "those of the sea", that is, coastal people. The dialects of all these clans may be classed together as Miwoidj'mada. The whole eastern area is divided among a number of clans, some now extinct and others seriously diminished in population, which share certain linguistic groups. These language groups are considered most important, and they belong exclusively to either the *dua* or the *jiritja* moiety, a division which extends throughout this whole area. Descent within them is patrilineal, but a man (or woman) always feels some attachment to the clan and linguistic group of his mother and mother's brother.

In western Arnhem Land, tribes and groups of tribes are (or were) independent units, not subdivided into clans. Tribal blocs were formed by those dependent on their neighbours in matters affecting economy, marriage and secular and sacred ceremony, and certain tribes recognised closer ties with one another than

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

with other adjacent groups. On the border line between western and eastern Arnhem Land there are tribes affiliated with the eastern people, but retaining their own distinct cultural pattern. Apart from the linguistic variations between the eastern and western groups, and the tribal organisation of the one and the clan-linguistic group set-up of the other, the principal difference lies in the eastern form of mainly patrilineal descent and the western pattern of descent through the mother.

The moiety is the most important feature in the social organisation of the Wulamba people of the east and south-east. It serves to classify under these two main headings all clans and linguistic groups, the known universe, and the whole life of the people, and affiliates all those belonging to the same moiety. The moieties are exogamous, and are thus the basis upon which marriage rules depend.

In western Arnhem Land we find the moiety-phratry arrangement (related to the totem) now influenced from the south by the subsection system, which is widely spread throughout Aboriginal Australia. Another feature here is the *namanamaidj*, which establishes a child's affinity with his father's group. This, together with tribal and linguistic membership, is patrilineal; but the descent of the moiety, phratry (and totem), and subsection, is matrilineal.

In eastern Arnhem Land the subsections have not yet been fully co-ordinated with the kinship structure, and many of the older people do not use them. Normally, however, the subsections are based on a system of marriage and descent, and are essentially a matter of kinship organisation. They group various relatives together under one term, in such a way that for general purposes all kinship terms are reduced to eight; and since there are eight divisions in this subsection system, four belong to one moiety, and four to the other.[1]

The eastern Arnhem Landers possess certain fundamental features in common with most other Australian Aboriginal communities. Away from European settlements, for instance, they are hunters and collectors who must forage for their food. On the northern and eastern coast of Arnhem Land food is certainly abundant and varied, but its constant supply depends on the

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
O117 Murngin O117

of the natives of North-eastern Arnhem Land, and to show how the impact upon these primitive hunting people of a virile culture from Indonesia, which has probably occurred only during the past two hundred years, has stimulated a remarkable ceremonial exchange cycle so that goods were passed far inland from the coast, while others were drawn from places hundreds of miles to the southward. This cycle, though in itself primarily social and not economic, supplies the motive force, the "drive", under cover of which an elaborate system of *ceremonial exchange* has been developed. This in turn furnishes the mechanism for the circulation of wealth or *gerri* (applied collectively to "goods" or "possessions", to material wealth), that would have been restricted, or at least rendered difficult, by the social structure of these people without the influence of the culture from Indonesia.[5]

[5] The fact that ceremonial exchange systems appear to have been widespread in Australia has been pointed out (see page 2). But the special type of local organisation which occurred in Arnhem Land, combined with the war-like reputation enjoyed by these people, would have tended to restrict communication. A remarkable feature of the social organisation of Arnhem Land north of a line from Bennet Bay and east of Cape Stewart, is the absence of any tribal organisation. The absence of tribal organisation to provide a basis for a wider solidarity, such as exists in neighbouring territories, has tended, as is shown on pages 9 to 13, to foster an intense internal solidarity within the clan, and within the larger group which consists of an aggregation of clans, called *mälla*; and thus to intensify the opposition with other groups. The effect of this social organisation, which was probably unstable, seems to be reflected in the intense and bitter rivalry and almost constant fighting, which raged among the hordes in far Eastern Arnhem Land, and which was responsible for many deaths. These are not conditions which encourage free intercourse and communication between groups widely separated, and although an extensive ceremonial exchange system undoubtedly existed long before visitors from the

[121] 177 Before discussing the effect of the ceremonial exchange cycle which was greatly stimulated by the impact of this dynamic force—the infiltration of Indonesian culture—upon the relatively simple culture pattern of these people, I shall describe in outline the typical culture of this area. It can be shown that in their own culture pattern, before the impact of Malay or proto-Malay culture, the natives of Arnhem Land already possessed the essential elements of a simple economic structure, with recognition of "value" and "wealth", the beginnings of the development of craft specialisation, mechanisms for the organisation of work and the carrying out of communal enterprises, and very definite ideas about the division of labour.

174. It is not possible to state with certainty when the first contact with the Indonesian visitors commenced, but in 1803 Matthew Flinders[6] learned from the crews of Malay praus whom he met on the north coast, that sixty praus, with a total of 1000 men, all from the Gulf of Boni in the Celebes, were on the coast of Arnhem Land at one time and were engaged in fishing for trepang. Although some of these people informed Flinders that they had visited the coast for the first time only twenty years before, and that they were then among the first of their people to do so,

177 431 619 721 Celebes came to Arnhem Land, it is probable that the *gerri* introduced by these visitors did much to overcome the effects of the segmentary organisation and to infuse life and vitality into the ceremonial exchange cycle which developed on a large scale in this territory. One of the aims of this paper is to show how the impact of this virile Indonesian culture may have overcome the effects of the intensely *segmentary* organisation. This effect of the ceremonial exchange cycle on social organisation is discussed in detail at a later stage in this paper.

[6] Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, Vol. 2, 1814, pp. 228-233.

in weaving and spinning by hand, and employ a simple spindle for the manufacture of string from opossum fur and human hair. They are skilled as wood carvers and make elaborately-barbed spear heads of wood, carved sacred totemic objects, and grave posts, as well as wooden dugout canoes. They also possess some skill in the working of metal, and make fine iron spear heads by beating out, cold, such unpromising material as odds and ends of scrap metal, rigging screws from ships, heavy metal drums, and even water pipes. In many of these processes the possession of special skill is recognised by the use of a distinctive name, and in their technology there is evidence of the beginning of craft specialisation.

Some account of the social organisation of the natives of Arnhem Land will be necessary in order to understand the economic organisation, food gathering and food preparation, and particularly the division of labour and the distribution of food.

The people of Eastern Arnhem Land are organised on a basis of localised totemic clans with patrilineal descent. The bond between members of a clan is descent, or belief in descent, from a common ancestor. Just as the individuals within each clan are believed to be related, so the clans themselves are considered to be linked to one another by the bonds of kinship which once existed among the clan ancestors or culture heroes who were the founders of the clans, thereby establishing a permanent relationship between the groups containing their kin which are believed to be descended from them.

In at least one respect the social organisation of Arnhem Land, east of Cape Stewart, is atypical. The definite tribal organisation which is a characteristic feature of most other

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943) 1949
OI17 Murngin OI17

parts of Australia, is absent. Instead, groups of clans, always of the same moiety,[7] are aggregated more or less closely according to the intensity of the relationship, gauged by the extent of the totemic inheritance from the ancestral culture heroes, which they possess in common.

To these aggregations of clans, the term *mälla*[8] is applied. The important factor in social organisation is the "dual division"—the division into two opposing groups. As stated above, certain clans within the same moiety are aggregated more or less closely into groups according to the in-

[7] An organisation known as the "dual division" occurs throughout Australia and in many parts of the Pacific. It transcends tribal boundaries and cuts through the whole of the social organisation, dividing the clans into two exogamous groups called "moieties".

In Arnhem Land, and in many other parts of Australia, the dual organisation divides all totems between the two moieties. The moieties generally, but not invariably, bear names. In Eastern Arnhem Land these names are *dua* and *yiritja*. There is a well-marked social "opposition" between moieties and the people often have the belief (which can have no sound foundation biologically, since members of the two moieties must intermarry) that members of the two moieties can be distinguished by physical differences, such as skin or eye colour, or the character of the hair, which in one moiety is said to be straight and in the other curly.

[8] *Mälla* is not capable of an exact or scientific definition and may mean nothing more than "a group". It is applied loosely to any group, whether of people or of clans, according to context, but in the sense mentioned here, has a more specific meaning—a group of clans linked by totemism. These groups are not to be regarded in any sense as tribes, but are bound together solely by totemic affinity. They may include within the scope of their solidarity, clans which possess much less cultural and linguistic affinity than those in the opposite moiety. In the absence of tribal organisation in North-eastern Arnhem Land, the opposition between moieties and hence the solidarity of clans within the *mälla*, tends to be emphasised.

tensity of their relationship, gauged by the degree of totemic inheritance. But these groups are certainly not tribes.[9]

The clan, or in practice its occupational group, the horde (*vide infra* p. 12), is the most important unit of social life in Arnhem Land. The clan is the territorial or land-owning group, but the horde is the war-making group, and each horde is to a large extent independent and self-governing. Anything approaching kingship or chieftainship is unknown in Arnhem Land. Law, order and discipline is laid down by tradition. It is defined in the mythology, and in the sagas of the culture heroes, and is maintained by public opinion, enforced by the old men, who act as custodians of the heritage of the clan. The authority of the old men is backed, in turn, by the *wäŋärr*, the totemic ancestors themselves, whose edicts are enforced by the threat of supernatural sanctions.

There is no individual ownership of land. Land ownership is vested in the clan as the hereditary group, and as this is a *patrilineal*[10] society, a man is born into his father's clan and has hunting rights over the territory of his own clan and generally over that of several others, particularly that

[9] The arbitrary use of the term *Murngin*, "tribe", for the people of Eastern Arnhem Land, which was introduced by Professor W. Lloyd Warner (*A Black Civilisation*; New York and London, 1937) is particularly unfortunate, for as was pointed out (footnote 5) east of Cape Stewart in North Central Arnhem Land tribal organisation is conspicuous by its absence from the intricate social organisation of the area, although it appears again at Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria, and occurs along the Roper River. The word *murngin* has nothing to do with social organisation, and is in no sense the name of a "tribe".

[10] Descent, among the aborigines, in family, clan and certain other hereditary groups, is reckoned either in the male line, i.e. through the father, in which case it is called *patrilineal*, or through the mother, when it is called *matrilineal*.

horde rests on no such solid foundation and is unstable. 614 621

Membership of each group within this complex segmentary organisation carries its own (often conflicting) solidarity and obligations, which however, form an integral scheme. Obligation and counter-obligation, defined by membership of the clan, and especially by kinship, supplies the incentive to work, to produce wealth and *gerri*, (page 5). Kinship also provides the chief basis for the division of the proceeds of communal enterprise. 602

Before discussing the economic structure in detail, it is necessary to look at the environment, the background, in which the aborigine lives. We must examine the natural resources which are available to him both for the gathering of food and for the manufacture of weapons, implements and utensils, as well as for the building of houses and watercraft. It is necessary to study the methods he has developed for the exploitation of these resources, for the collecting of raw material, for the manufacture of food and the utensils necessary in his domestic economy and activities. It is necessary, also, to examine any mechanisms which he may have developed for the distribution of these goods between individuals within a group, or between groups, and again, in a wider field, to trace the beginning of any system of barter or trade in manufactured objects or commodities, with groups in distant areas. 121

Does such exchange or trade exist? Is it a regular, (organised) matter or merely casual and sporadic? How is it carried out, and what is the motive force, the incentive, which is required to overcome the difficulties inherent in the "segmentary organisation" which would tend to prevent any extensive form of intercourse between widely separated groups? We have seen already that the segmentary organisation, which divides the people into small groups, each with an intense internal solidarity, also furnishes a basis for 571 619

571opposition between groups, which, in the absence of some
619 powerful motive or urge, must tend to restrict communication between people who are situated at any distance from one another.

133 Let us consider, first, the country and its natural resources. Arnhem Land is a vast territory, still in its virgin state. The terrain is rugged. There are no high mountains but only low hills, which, except on the western fringe, rarely exceed four or five hundred feet in height. These hills, which often outcrop with bare rock, give an arid, even desolate, appearance to the country. Undulating lowlands and broad plains
[137] stretch for hundreds of miles. These are more fertile, and are covered either with a dense growth of long grass or with savannah woodland. They are intersected by numerous watercourses, which in the dry season become mere dry ravines with a few deep waterholes. In the wet season these river courses are raging torrents.

813 The natives are familiar with the various botanical (eco-
824 logical) associations which characterise this territory, and distinguish these by special terms. They can name, without hesitation, the characteristic trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants in every association, as well as the food plants and animals, and the raw materials used in technology, which at any season of the year[12] they obtain from each of these associations. In this we see a system and an orderliness

[12] Some idea of the critical knowledge of their territory and its resources which the Australian aborigines possess, and of the systematic way in which they classify these resources, as well as their appreciation of the influence of the seasonal cycle on their life and economy, may be gathered from the following accounts of the people of the neighbouring territory of Cape York Peninsula:

Names and Naming in the Wik Monkan Tribe (in press) and *The Seasonal Factor in Human Culture*, Proc. Prehist. Soc. July-Dec. 1939, No. 10, pp. 209-221.

of their immediate neighbours who could solicit such *gerri* by themselves making substantial ceremonial presentations, requiring appropriate return gifts.

The social implication of the *kumur märnda* relationship is such that if the inland people maintain a constant stream of *gerri* to their neighbours to the north, these must be reciprocated, with resultant increase in the volume and tempo of the exchange cycle. It will be evident that under this system it would be impossible for any man to accumulate, or to hold permanently, much *gerri*. To do so would mean to default in his obligations to exchange partners. He would lose prestige and social status. His social personality would suffer, which, to these people, would far outweigh the value of the possessions. The functional importance of the exchange system and the vital part it plays in the social and ceremonial life of the people of Arnhem Land, as well as the stimulus which it must have received through the coming of the Macassar visitors, is evident. The Macassar influence is important not merely as a source of the greatly valued *muadäk*, but also for the incentive which this gave to the inland groups to send up *gerri* to *kumur muadäk*, which they knew must be reciprocated with the articles which they valued, and which were most important to their own social life and economy. And by no means the least important feature of the ceremonial exchange cycle was the part it played in overcoming the effect of the segmentary organisation, which would tend normally to restrict communication, a fact to which reference has already been made.

The facts which have been presented, although they deal with one relationship only, will suffice to show that the influence of the Macassar visitors on the economic life and ceremonial exchange cycle of the natives of Arnhem Land

Kinship is very important in Australia and is the chief factor underlying social organisation and behaviour both between individuals and between groups. Every individual is born into a kinship pattern which under the classificatory system defines his relationship not only with his own kin but also with all those whom he meets during the ordinary course of his life. Kinship terms, or terms of relationship, are used in place of personal names. They are not mere terms of address, for each carries a set pattern of behaviour.

Mălla, in literal translation, any *group*, but used also in a special sense for an aggregation of clans linked together by the possession of common totems or by the sharing of at least a part of a common totemic inheritance.

Moiety (see dual division).

Patrilineal. Descent in clan and in certain other social groups is traced either in the male or in the female line, i.e. through the father or through the mother. When reckoned through the father it is *patrilineal* and when traced through the mother it is said to be *matrilineal*.

Totems and totemism. A totem has been defined as an animal, plant or inanimate object, with which a person, or a group of people, believe that they have a special relationship. This is true, but it does not go far enough. Many different kinds of totemism are known in Australia, including clan, moiety, conceptional, personal, cult and ceremonial totemism. In all, a very special relationship exists between the individual or the group and its totem or totems. Often, in clan totemism, the people believe that they are descended from one of the totemic ancestors of their clan and that these ancestors, called *wänjarr in* Eastern Arnhem Land, founded the clan and its culture and way of life and established the traditions which the people follow today.

Tribe. In Australia the tribe is merely a linguistic unit, a group of people often very loosely united by the possession of a common language, and whose component clans occupy a certain definite territory. It is certainly not the most important unit of social life. It is not the land-owning group, the law-making or war-making group and has no political autonomy. Tribal organisation is conspicuous by its absence from most of Eastern Arnhem Land, although normal tribal organisation occurs at Groote Eylandt, at Bennet Bay and on the southern boundary of the territory, along the Roper River, as well as from the vicinity of Cape Stewart westwards.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

a member of the Yiritcha moiety, marries his mother's brother's daughter, he is marrying a woman of the Balang subsection and Dua moiety, and also of a local clan different from his own, as will be shown later.

This is possibly somewhat confusing to the reader, and to all who do not possess an understanding of aboriginal social organization. But I can vouch for the fact that the system is intelligible and quite logical, and those who tend to regard the Aborigines as a low type, or of poor intelligence, must reconcile that opinion with the fact that the north-east Arnhem Land Aborigines not only understand the system, and make it work in everyday life, but that they adjusted this new grouping to their own kinship and marriage rules and to their dual organization.

I have enlarged on this matter, not only to give some idea of the background of behaviour in the region, but also to suggest that in matters of importance to themselves, the Aborigines are just as intelligent and logical as we are. It is our ignorance of their world of thought which often causes us to regard them as low in the scale of intelligence, when, as a matter of fact, we are not acting very intelligently in judging them without a thorough knowledge of the facts.

The Aborigines and their Country

Here and there Mr Chaseling mentions hordes and sacred wells. This introduces us to the fundamental unit of the social and even 'political' organization. The tribe as an organization of clans or hordes does not really exist in this region. Instead there are a number of local groups, each occupying on the average about 360 square miles of country, loosely bound together by the fact that they possess in common certain features of social organization, for example, the kinship system, marriage rule, eight-subsection system, and the dual organization (or division of the community into two groups for certain ceremonial and social purposes);

619 614 they also possess rituals and myths in common, and in many cases, obvious dialects of one language.

Each of these groups is a patrilineal clan, the members (apart from the wives of the men), being all related in the male line; a social group consists of a man and his brothers and sisters, his children, his son's children, his brother's children and such like. Members of such a clan must never [582] marry one another, but only members of other clans, according to the kinship rules. This rule is called local exogamy. The members of the local clan, together with [621] [591] their wives who have come to live with them (as is the custom), are called a horde.

779 775 614 The most important feature of the local clan is the link which binds its members to one or more sacred totemic waterholes (or wells) in the clan country. The well was [778] formed by the cult totemic hero and ancestor of the clan. In it have sojourned from the great ancestral time the spirits of all those whose earthly course is run, that is, the souls of the dead. Also associated with the well are the clan's totemic emblems and ceremonies. One important function of the latter is the maintenance of the regular order [789] of the dry and wet seasons, and the link with the creative epoch of the totem. Incidentally the souls of the dead may take up their abode, not only in the well, but also in the totemic emblems, and are believed to be present at the great totemic ceremonies. In addition they are called upon to do their part in some rites, especially in connexion with burial. [764] For example, in Chapter 14, Mr Chaseling refers to a deceased child's grandfather chanting a prayer to his own dead brother (that is, the child's 'tribal' grandfather), to come and take the child back to Buralkor, the Island of the Dead. But though a deceased person's spirit goes to this island, it re- [778] turns to the totemic well in his clan's country. This may seem contradictory to us, but just as space and time were no obstacle to the great ancestresses who came from the island,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

murulkurr' (referring to wives' mothers' brothers), and 601
'nguti walkurr' (wives' mothers' mothers' brothers). In all I traced over one hundred different relationships, of which only about one-third had English equivalents. Fortunately for us, modern society does not recognize the remainder, for some of them are involved and interminable—such as 'mumulkurr', who may be wives' maternal grandmothers, or grandmother's brothers' wives, or maternal uncles' wives' mothers.

There are several groups of loosely knit hordes in Arnhem 619
Land. In the west from Cape Don to the Liverpool River, thirty hordes are associated in common society, each speaking similar dialects, but, as a social group, having no intercourse other than that of a warlike nature with adjacent horde-groups. Again, immediately east of Cape Stewart, and extending to Blue Mud Bay, two hundred and fifty miles away, is the group of thirty-six hordes amongst whom I spent most of my time. A peculiarity of these large independent groups is that they are nameless, though occasionally reference may be made to 'island people' or 'mountain folk'. Yulengor from the Murungga Island horde are frequently called 'Murrnggin'. Hordes in the Gulf country call those in the west 'Meerwaitj', which means 'Where the sun goes down', and the Meerwaitj vaguely refer to the eastern Yulengor as 'Wornba' or 'Where the sun gets up'. These are only vague local references; the social group as a whole is nameless.

Throughout Arnhem Land many sacred trees, wells, 773
creeks, springs, reefs, and peculiar rocks, were visited by the 778
creative Ancestors, and here they performed important acts and instructed their children in their lore. Yams and digging-sticks, used first by the Ancestors, are linked to a [779]
totemic well where the earliest nomads were taught to dig for food, and at another creek the pandanus palm umbrella mat, 'Ngunmurra', was first introduced.